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A SYNECDOCHIC DESCRIPTION OF MORAL ATTRIBUTIVES APPLIED TO DEITY AND PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS*

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This paper addresses the moral attributives used of deity and people the language of Evangelical Christians. Descriptions of the moral attributives have been given, notably, as literal language and metaphoric language. I describe these attributives as synecdoches, depending on the ideas that i) moral attributives applied to humans can be viewed as part of a whole realized in deity, ii) that moral attributives can be described as applying human-to-deity and deity-to-human, equating to part-for-whole and whole-for-part synecdoche and iii) that there is a consistent polysemy in the moral attributives in relation to each of the types of synecdoche.

1. Introduction

> When we find that we run [our] heads up against the limits of language, we should not say that there is something beyond ordinary language that we could know in extraordinary language or non-linguistically. Nor, on the other hand, should we say that there is nothing beyond ordinary language in the sense that empirical concepts and terms describe without remainder all that there is. What we should say is that there is something *in* ordinary language which is not ordinary and not expressible in empirical terms (Daly 1961:119).

At issue is the nature of what might be termed God-language, namely, the religious language used by Evangelical Christians[1] to talk about God. Specifically, the usage of the moral attributes of God stated as adjectival attributives bears scrutiny.[2] The God-language investigated as examples are the following: *holy*, *sacred*, *righteous*, *good*, *just* and *true*. While these are often referred to as either literal or metaphoric terms, neither literalness nor metaphor match both the intuitions of the religious people who are most often the users of the terms and the reality of reference in their use. Instead, a synecdochic description more fully corresponds to the manner in which religious believers use God-language, and also accords with those realities of reference.

Green (1996:57) reminds us that it is characteristic of adjectives that they may be polysemus. The variety of possibilities are said to derive from a normal or conventional use. How the normal usage is extended is not important here. What is relevant is that a synecdochic relationship between an adjective used concerning a deity and the same adjective used concerning a human, place, etc. is another manifestation of this polysemy: there will be a difference in acceptability of

the moral attributives when applied to humans and deity, and a difference when applied to believers and non-believers.

To begin, situating a description of religious language that takes into account the intuitions of religious believers is defended and that structure examined. Then, that God-language is used non-literally is shown by examining possible contexts of use. The possible non-literal descriptions are delineated next; the definitions of synecdoche and metaphor both justifiably stand in need of brief comment. From these definitions will emerge the predictions that synecdoche will describe sentences with God language as truth-conditionally uninformative, while metaphor will describe sentences with God language as truth-conditionally false, and false by even speaker-intention. Finally, two classes of moral attributives describe the correspondence between the normal usage of God language and the description synecdoche provides. Evangelical Christians, in general, use the moral attributives both of humans in light of the way they apply to deity, and of deity in light of the way they apply to humans; predictions will then emerge that the description of God-language as human-to-deity/part-for-whole and deity-to-human/whole-for-part are attested. The attributives will break down into two part polysemy and three part polysemy along the part-for-whole/whole-for-part distinction. While metaphor does not explain this usage, synecdoche does.

2. Situating religious language in religious belief

If God-language is non-literal (as is argued in §3, below),then it becomes a much more difficult question how to describe that language. It has been argued that if language is not used literally, then any description will be a description of use (Davidson 1979, Martinich 1984). While not necessarily leading to all the conclusions that are sometimes drawn from such a statement (e.g., that there is then no semantic valuation), such statements do warrant an investigation of language use in a context of belief. Such a view is, of course, not the only one available. During the era of philosophy when the position known as logical positivism was dominant, another possibility was asserted. To deem a facet of language as not belonging to the realm of the scientifically verifiable, or verifiable in a more ordinary sense, even, then that language is nonsensical or empty or meaningless. Rudolf Carnap 1959 asserts this view. A dismissive treatment like Carnap's, though, misses a crucial aspect of religious language: religious believers cannot use just any religious language in just any way. They have intuitions about the correctness of religious language. If Carnap were right, this would be difficult to explain. Rather, taking a view where the religious beliefs of religious language users plays an explanatory role is desirable.

Rajeshwari Pandharipande suggests just such an examination for metaphor and religious language in her paper by the same title. Pandharipande (1990:186) argues that 'in order to analyze the metaphor both ... its linguistic structure and the content of religion have to be taken into account'. As the structure of the language itself ceases to be uniquely informative, the religious beliefs become more crucial in explicating the language. In her paper, Hinduism is strongly necessary for explaining metaphors, such as Hindu concepts of time and karma

(1990:192). These metaphors cannot be fully understood outside the context of Hindu religious beliefs. Indeed, in the case of karma, it is apparent that without the context of religious beliefs, such a metaphor would not even clearly be possible.

Similarly, the beliefs of Evangelical Christians play a role in the way they use religious language. To the end of providing the belief context, what follows are examples and explanation of the relevant beliefs to moral attributives as applied to deity and humans.

Millard J. Erickson has written an introductory theology text that is considered a standard in Evangelical circles. In Erickson (1992:79).[3] Erickson makes a clear distinction between attributing *holy* to God and to a human. He writes that 'holiness is not an attribute (a permanent, inseparable characteristic) of Adam, but it is of God'. From this we see that to understand sentences like *Adam is holy* it is crucial to understand *God is holy*. At the beginning, a literal understanding, a metaphoric one and a synecdochic understanding are all possibilities.

R. C. Sproul is also a theologian commonly referred to by Evangelical Christians. In Sproul (1985:55-7), a text written for lay Christians[4], he argues that when *holy* is applied to ordinary things, e.g., places and people, *holy* is not by itself a moral attributive. Only by a connection to God do these things derive a moral tone. Thus if Adam is holy, it is only because God is holy and Adam has some link to God. This is a widely accepted, even central, doctrine in Evangelical Christianity and also extends to other moral attributes. At this point, a literal description of God-language becomes a less likely candidate, and metaphoric and synecdochic treatments seem more likely. Of the last two, a synecdochic treatment seems more plausible. In §3, we will definitively rule out the literal possibility. After we define the remaining possibilities in §4, we will argue for a synecdochic rather than a metaphoric description in §5.

3. God-language is non-literal

The moral attributive language used of deity is best understood as non-literal. If God-language is literal, terms applied simultaneously to humans and deity in similar contexts will be first both be subject to some conceivable truth conditions of a standard type, for example a Tarksi-style theory of meaning, as set out in Davidson 1969.[5] Davidson (1967:96) gives a familiar example of truth conditions, shown in (1a, b).

(1) a. *S* is true if and only if *p*.
b. 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.

Davidson (1967:96,7) makes a point that (1b) is very straightforward and, on the surface, even uninformative. However, he goes on to say is that (1b) is not simple synonomy: it tells what it is to know the meaning of *Snow is white*. A speaker will be able to assert (1b) and have some idea of *snow* and *white* independently. Furthermore, he asserts that 'we can tell easily enough when particular pronouncements of the theory comport with our understanding of the language'. Example (1b) can easily be confirmed, then, according to Davidson.

God-language cannot be so described. The truth conditions for (2a) can be described in (2b), but what they mean, what sort of confirmation would be involved, is not so easily available.

(2) a. God is good.
b. 'God is good' is true if and only if God is good.

Someone has (2b) available if asked what *God is good* means, but it is not clear what is meant by combining *God* with *is good*. It is this type of situation that led Carnap to the conclusions mentioned above. The contrast between (1b) and (2b) is evident. In fact, as early as Thomas Aquinas the difference between sentences like (3a) and (3b) has been noted.

(3) a. God is good.
b. Sam is good.

Sentences like (3a) have been said to have meaning by analogy to sentences like (3b): God's goodness is described in terms of a human understanding of human goodness, only infinitely greater. The problems with such an explanation will be touched on in §5.1. For the point here, it will suffice to note that even religious people have long conceded the non-literal nature of at least some religious language. In terms of Pandharipande 1990, the structure of language has failed to give an adequate explanation, so facts of usage and context must play that explanatory role.

4. Defining the Terms

4.1 *Synecdoche*

Taking our definition from Rice & Shofer 1977 and Harmon & Holman 1992, synecdoche is defined as a usage of language in which a part represents the whole, or the whole represents a part. At this point, metonymy and synecdoche bear distinguishing in brief. There are instances when something is substituted for an object[6] or idea with which it is associated but of which it is not part. An example would be referring to royalty as *the crown*. At this point, Rice & Shofer label *the crown* as a synecdoche, due to a contextual situation where *crown* and *royalty* have come to be logically located with one another, providing a category of synecdoche described as container-contained. However, the container-contained relationship is not in keeping with the other instances of synecdoche, in which there is a more intimate relationship between the whole and the part: being purportedly located one within the other. While the crown is a part of the office of royalty, it is not part of royal people themselves, who are obviously people and not (unless we are uncharitable) inanimate objects at all. Similarly, there is the act of referring to the presidency of the United States as *the White House* and the Congress and Senate as *Capitol Hill* because those locations are where the different offices are carried out. These are examples of metonymy. Here, too, we have two directly related objects, but not logically (purportedly) located one within another. Examples (4a, b) will illustrate the difference between metonymy and literal language.

(4) a. The White House issued a statement today.
b. The President issued a statement today.

While (4a) and (4b) communicate essentially the same information, only (4b) is literal. The White House building did no issuing, while the President, or his/her representatives, did.

Synecdoche, though, is described differently. Previously, purportedly actual location of objects one within the other defined synecdoche in a whole-for-part/part-for-whole relationship. The relationship intended may come about as part of a cultural convention (e.g., a religion), but within that convention it will not be by some accidental association. Examples (4a) and (4b) are accidental associations (despite a long history of association); here they will be repeated for convenience as (5a, b) and contrasted with a synecdoche in (5c).

(5) a. The White House issued a statement today.
b. The President issued a statement today.
c. That poor soul issued a statement today.

The phrase *That poor soul* is not strictly literal, as the President is neither poor in the financial sense of the word nor is s/he only a soul. As *soul* is the term that is used synecdochically, we will concentrate on it. *Soul* is viewed as a smaller representative part of the human person. Here, a part is used for the whole and is indistinguishable from the whole. If the person under discussion is Bill Clinton, and his mother refers to him as *that poor soul*, there is no other person or object possibly referred to by the phrase as Clinton's soul is inseparable from his person (this is true regardless of the reality of the soul; such a statement can at least be construed counterfactually with the same results). In no possible world that contains the idea of a soul that is Clinton's, can it occupy space in the physical realm other than Clinton's body. It is entirely possible, though, for some other building beside the White House to hold the offices of the President and the White House to still exist. Perhaps Congress and the President decided to switch locations for a while, or, due to threat of personal harm, the President is moved to a secret location permanently. The offices of the President are then not in the White House, even if the White House still exists, while Clinton's soul is yet in his body regardless of circumstances, at least in terms of a counterfactual definition of *soul*.

Another example is given in (6), this time of an inanimate object, where (6a) is the synecdoche and (6b) is what is literally meant.

(6) a. Nice set of wheels you have there.
b. Nice car you have there.

Wheels is used via synecdoche to refer to a whole car. In the case of wheels for car, we are speaking of an object that is essentially made up of many smaller, distinguishable parts. However, wheels yet share in the same identity as *car*. While there are other objects containing wheels besides cars, and (6a) might then be paired with *Nice bicycle you have there*, a car must have as three or more of its parts, wheels. Unless the definition or idea of a car is fundamentally changed (say, to the idea of a car in *Star Wars*, for instance), wheels and cars are bound to-

gether definitionally. Being bound together definitionally and a purportedly actual location of objects one within the other are the salient features of synecdoche in this discussion.

4.2 *Metaphor*

While there are various definitions of metaphor and varying degrees of difference between them, there are also salient features of metaphor for this paper. Donald Davidson 1979 bases his treatment of metaphor on one of these features. In describing the means by which metaphor is figurative, he points out that metaphors are almost without exception either false truth-conditionally or absurdly true. If they were true statements, then they would cease to be figurative; if the truth conditions were met for any metaphoric statement as a propositional statement, then that statement would lose the power of being a metaphor. Suppose a business executive, Sam, is conversing with a colleague and friend, Mary, and he says (7) to her.

(7) The wolves are on our trail again.

If (7) is to be propositionally true, then there must be wolves following the spore of Sam. But suppose Sam and Mary are talking about a rival faction in the company, and the rival group is seeking to oust Sam and his colleague from their positions. Obviously, the sentence is false, no matter how well it points out the character of the rival group, or the hunted feeling Sam has. Absurdly true is illustrated by the obvious truth of (8), taken from Davidson 1979.

(8) No man is an island.

It is absurd to think that a man might literally be an island, and thus the negation of that falsehood is an absurd truth. The absurd truths, Davidson points out, generally are a result of negated metaphors.

Martinich 1984 also posits metaphors as matters of use rather than meaning, but in a different way. Martinich builds his treatment of metaphor on the Gricean conversational maxim of quality: say only what you know to be true. Searle 1979 is even less restrictive, where Searle generalizes metaphor as potentially involving any of the Gricean maxims. The argument is that for metaphor to work, the speaker must not only make a truth-conditionally false statement, as in Davidson's account, but also mean to be false and recognized as such (in the case of Martinich 1984) or otherwise infelicitous (in the case of Searle 1979). The prediction from these two features of metaphor, that sentences containing them are false and that speaker intentions acknowledge the falsity, will be realized in God-language, as well, if the moral attributives are metaphoric instead of synecdochic.

5. Synecdochic nature of moral attributives

In progressing into the synecdochic nature of moral attributives, they should first be classified. First it is noted that God-language attributives are distinct in their possessing a semantic feature of moral and then for having application to both deity and humans. Terms like *healthy*, *big*, *red* and *hungry* are not included because they seem to be purely earthy (e.g., human) and lack any moral relevance in

their analysis. Likewise, terms such as *immensity*, *incomprehensibility*, *omniscience*, *omnipotent*, etc., are not included because they also lack any moral relevance in their analysis. Moral attributives, though, in God-language form from both secular and religious language, and in the mixing apply to both God and human. Figure 1 will demonstrate how the intermixing occurs.

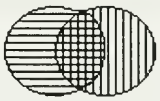

fig.1

=purely human attributives =purely divine attributives =both divine and human =moral attributives

As for the moral attributives, there are two basic classes of attributives, working in two different directions: human attributes applied to deity, which is whole-for-part synecdoche, and divine attributes applied to humans, which is part-for-whole synecdoche. Terms such as *just*, *good* and *true* are used as human attributives applied to deity. That is, the quality they describe is essentially human as far as a human point of understanding them is concerned, and thus the nature of their application to deity will reflect that. Terms like *holy*, *righteous* and *sacred* are attributives that are essentially divine applied to humans, and the nature of their application will thus differ from that of the human attributives. If this is the case, then their will be a difference even in describing the attributives in terms of polysemy. The part-for-whole synecdoches will exhibit a two part polysemy: human and deity. On the other hand, whole-for-part synecdoches will exhibit a three part polysemy: non-affiliated-human, affiliated-human and deity.[7]

This general understanding of the moral attributives is a reflection of Evangelical Christian belief. Turning to Erickson (1992:76), we read that God's attributes are of two types: immanent (within the world) and transcendent (beyond the world). In terms of Figure 1, the transcendent attributes would be those which are purely divine, while the immanent ones would be the moral attributes. The question is now whether metaphor or synecdoche fits this description moral attributes. Metaphor will be considered as an option first, in §5.1. If metaphor fails to capture the part-for-whole attributives discussed in §5.1, then there is still the possibility that a metaphoric treatment might account for the three part polysemy argue for in §5.2. Metaphor will, therefore, be given a second consideration in light of that new situation.

At this point it is useful to distinguish an analogical treatment of God-language from a synecdochic one, to avoid confusion below. An analogical description of George's saying *God is good* fits something like this: George knows what human *good* is. Deity's nature, e.g., goodness, will not conflict with this fundamental human attribute, but will necessarily exceed it. While we may not understand the exact extent of deity's goodness (or any of the other attributes classified with it), we do understand the basic fact that it is an infinite extension of the

human attributive. The familiar problem with this analysis is that humans can have no idea just what an infinite extension of anything will be; such knowledge is crucial for analogy. An explanation via synecdoche does not make this claim. Rather, the only claim that a synecdochic description makes is that whatever George's goodness is, it is a part of whatever goodness that God's goodness is.

5.1 Correlation between human-to-deity application and part-for-whole synecdoche

The hypothesis that moral attributives applied to deity are synecdochic predicts that the movement of application from human to deity will correspond to part-for-whole synecdoche. *Good* applied to God is, then, the human part used to express the divine whole. Moreover, this predicts that *good* and similar attributives will be polysemus as defined for adjectives in general in Green 1996. They will apply acceptably in the religious language of Evangelical Christianity to people who are affiliated with the religious movement and those who are not; acceptability judgments will vary when application to God is introduced.

The following model will illustrate the relationship of *good* with God and human, and hopefully make more accessible what is potentially a very obscure notion (partly derived form similar models of synecdoche in Rice & Shofer 1977):

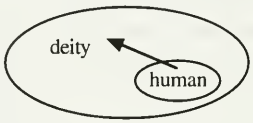

fig. 2

Figure 2 shows the part to whole relationship of the attributive language typified by *good*, etc. Further, the proportions of whatever attribute are not shown to be analogous, e.g. specifiable, but only that the human application is part of the attribute in its whole in deity, with the directional understanding of application being human to God. Our understanding of God's goodness is first based on our understanding of George's goodness: the part serves to demonstrate the whole. A synecdochic description will show there to be a related polysemy, between humans and deity.

Good, for instance, can be applied in the same moral sense to a number of objects, as illustrated in (9a-d).

(9) a. Sally is a believer and is a good person.
b. Jack is an atheist and is also a good person.
c. They are both good people.
d. God is good.

Good, it is evident, applies despite attitude toward religious belief or any purported activity or relationship to divinity. A synecdochic explanation must account for this, and statements like in Erickson (1992:198), where Erickson writes that 'unregenerate individuals are incapable of genuinely good, redeeming

works'[8], which would seem to contradict the above mentioned acceptability. *Just* offers the same *explananda* in (10a-c).

(10) a. George the devout religious juror is just.
b. Jack is an atheist and a religion-hating juror, but is just.
c. God is just.

And so on for *true*.

The moral attributives *good*, *just*, and *true* apply to humans and to deity with equal ease, as long a some criterion of goodness is not contradicted. However, we will argue below that they are used of deity in a manner that moves beyond their use for humans. How does metaphor fare in accounting for this? Metaphor works, according to Davidson 1979, by asserting false statements or absurd truths and, according to Martinich 1984 and Searle 1979, by the speaker's intentions being for that falsehood to be recognized. For metaphor to apply, then, deity must not be good or must be obviously good. The intuitions of believers, in general, contradict this soundly. Example (11a) is neither patently false nor absurdly true, nor is its negation in (11b).

(11) a. God is good.
b. God is not good.

Moreover, while an argument for (11a, b) being metaphoric will predict that the speaker intends to flout the maxim of quality, a believer has no such intention. While synecdoche also captures the human-to-deity relationship in *good*, *just* and *true* as part-for-whole, metaphor implies no such relationship.

Additionally, a metaphoric description does not account for (9a-d), here repeated as (12a-d) for convenience.

(12) a. Sally is a believer and is good person.
b. Jack is an atheist and is also good person.
c. They are both good people.
d. God is good.

What metaphor fails to capture is that their is a strong link between God's goodness and a person's goodness in Evangelical Christian belief. Metaphor allows only a weak link, as in a person having some bare, and even deniable, description as an animal, as in (7), above. The account a metaphoric treatment offers will not be able to explain (13) because of this. Take a paraphrase from Erickson (1992:197) and the quote from Erickson (1992:198) as examples (13a) and (13b), respectively.

(13) a. There are unregenerate persons who are good people.
b. Unregenerate individuals are incapable of genuinely good, redeeming works.

Metaphor can do nothing with (13a) and (13b) except note a contradiction. One or the other must be patently false or absurdly true, or the speaker of (13a, b) must have some intention of flouting the maxim of quality. Neither is the case.

In a synecdochic treatment, though, the variety seen in (12) can be explained in light of (13). In order for people to be good, according to Evangelical Christianity, all they have to do is partake in a general way in goodness, thus (13a). In order to be genuinely good, then people must partake in goodness in the way God does, thus (13b). [*Genuine*] is a marker that indicates what follows is being used in a special sense. Synecdoche describes (13a) as an assertion of people having a piece of goodness that is part of God's goodness, but that (13b) is characteristic of a goodness more explicitly part of God's goodness, which accords with the belief context in which such assertions will be made. Specifically, there is no pragmatic oddness in (12) or (13) because the direction of applicability is from human-to-deity, a part-for-whole synecdoche. The attributives are polysemus in application to non-affiliated people and religious people, but only in a special situation when some implicit understanding of deity is employed.

To demonstrate the full sense of the polysemy present in Evangelical Christian part-for-whole language, consider (14a) as contrasted with (14b).

(14) a. %George the conqueror commanded nations to be annihilated and is good.
b. God commanded nations to be annihilated and is good.

To predicate *good* of George when he has commanded nations to be annihilated is somewhat odd, but possibly acceptable. The distinction becomes more clear when *good* is negated, as in (15a, b).

(15) a. George the king commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son and is not good.
b. %God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son and is not good.

While (14a) may be less odd, (15b) is outright unacceptable to believers. The oddness of (14a) is in a general human idea that genocide is not good; perhaps deity can retain a description of being good, then, when humans cannot. Moreover, the sentiments of most individuals would match (15a); no human can order a father to murder his son and be good. Believers, on the other hand, will not have the sentiments in (15b), as God might have some ultimate purpose (etc.) which a father murdering a son will accomplish and justifies the killing. Making the human a believer does not change the judgment here. In (16a, b), George is also identified as a believer, and the results are the same.[9]

(16) a. %George the believing conqueror commanded nations to be annihilated and is good.
b. %George the believing king commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son and is not good.

Apparently there is something in saying that deity is good that is not in saying a human is good. The attributives like *good*, *just* and *true* are polysemus between human and deity and portray a human-to-deity, part-for-whole application, just as hypothesized.

5.2 Correlation between deity-to-human application and whole-for-part synecdoche

Terms like *holy*, *righteous* and *sacred* do not perform in the religious language of Evangelical Christianity exactly like the preceding terms. When attributives such as *holy* are utilized, the relationship is one of the whole standing in for the part. The movement is one of God-usage to human-usage. To say *Mary is holy* and *God is holy* is not to say that God's holiness is a transcendence of Mary's, but that Mary's is a facet of God's. If Mary says *God is holy* her process of cognition is moving from knowing that God's holiness is the perfect representation, and any further application of the term is based on that and is only a partial representation. The following graphic illustrates workings of whole-for-part synecdoche:

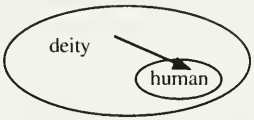

fig. 3

Figure 3 shows the same total relationship of attributives as Figure 2, that of God possessing the full and perfect characteristic and the human possessing a diluted form. The difference between-part-for whole and whole-for-part is then that of application and of polysemy. Human-based attributives are noted among creation without noting deity, but deity-based attributives are noted among creation only after noting deity. Further, deity-for-human attributives will exhibit a three part polysemy: non-affiliated-human, affiliated-human and deity.

In examples (17a, b) there is nothing odd, while (17c) is pragmatically odd.[10]

(17) a. Mary the believer is holy and righteous.
b. God is holy and righteous.
c. %Jack the atheist is holy and righteous.

Both *holy* and *righteous* are words that bear some sort of tie to deity. Thus far, only part of the predictions made in the last paragraph are born out. Examples (17a, b) as contrasted with (17c) do demonstrate that there is at least a two part polysemy: between non-affiliated-humans on the one hand, and affiliated-humans and deity on the other. A metaphoric treatment can at least account for this polysemy: any use of *holy* or *righteous* concerning non-affiliated-humans could arguably be metaphoric. This does accord with part of the context of Evangelical Christian belief: in order for an individual to be considered holy or righteous, there must be some direct link with deity. An application of the deity-related moral attributive to a non-affiliated-human may well produce the response from a believer that it is acceptable as long as it is not really meant. That statement would accord with the various definitions of metaphor that have been given. However, it does not capture the third of the predicted three part polysemy, that there will be a distinction between deity and affiliated-humans.[11]

Beyond this distinction, the whole-for-part synecdoche becomes apparent when *holy* and *righteous* are negated, as in (18a, b).

(18) a. Sam the believer, who violates Gods law at times, is holy and righteous.
b. %God, who violates Gods law at times, is holy and righteous.

A believer's intuitions about (18a) are that Sam might yet be holy and righteous while violating Gods laws. Concerning (18b), a believer will be thrown into conflict by the notion that God might yet be holy and righteous while violating divine law. Now the third of the three part polysemy is provided: there is a distinction between deity and the affiliated-human in the attributives *holy* and *righteous*. The distinction also accords with the belief context provided by Evangelical Christianity, as exemplified by Erickson (1992:314, 15), among others, that a believer may be imperfectly holy and righteous while God may not be but perfectly holy and righteous.

Sacred is a slightly different case, as a general view might be that life is sacred, therefore George the believer and Jack the atheist are both sacred. However, this view in many instances stems in Evangelical Christian belief from the idea that life itself flows either by the act of the Divine. Using buildings/places instead of people will demonstrate better the deity-relatedness of *sacred* in (19a, b) where (19a) is acceptable and (19b) pragmatically odd.

(19) a. The Sacred Hearts Cathedral is sacred.
b. %Memorial Auditorium is sacred.

The tie with divinity is evident. The Sacred Hearts Cathedral is devoted to deity and may therefore be termed *sacred*; Memorial Auditorium is devoted to sports (and general public events) and may not be termed *sacred* and keep the divine associations in the word. A metaphoric treatment would possibly contradict the judgment on (19b), perhaps by asserting that Memorial Auditorium is sacred, in a relevant sense, to Illini football enthusiasts. As with holy and righteous, though, extending the scope of consideration slightly will provide a situation which metaphor cannot account for but synecdoche can. The whole-for-part synecdochic quality in *sacred* is illustrated by carrying (19a) one step further in (20a), and contrasting it with (20b)

(20) a. The Sacred Hearts Cathedral is sacred and will be demolished by the Church to build a new cathedral.
b. %God is sacred and will be disposed of and replaced by another entity.

Any reluctance to the action predicted in (20a) might possibly be overcome with reason, e.g., after all, it is only a building. Overcoming reluctance to the action predicted in (20b), however, will not fall to the same reasoning, e.g., after all, God is only deity. To support (20a) in the face of believers is not to claim that the Sacred Hearts Cathedral is not a cathedral; to propose (20b) in the face of believers is to claim that God is not in fact deity. Once again the predictions are born out. The attributive *sacred* applies only when their is a direct link to deity, as pro-

jected by the whole-for-part, deity-for-human characterization of synecdoche. Moreover, this kind of synecdoche displays a three part polysemy, analogous to that displayed by *holy* and *righteous*: non-affiliated (human/place), affiliated (human/place) and deity.[12] Metaphor fails to capture this polysemy in its entirety, as it has nothing to say concerning the contrast between (20a) and (20b) that corresponds with the belief context of Evangelical Christianity, which posits a strong connection between deity and moral attributives like *holy*, *righteous* and *sacred*.

6. Conclusion

We draw the conclusion from the facts of use found in (1-3) that the God-language of Evangelical Christianity is not literal, as that hypothesis' prediction fails. When a truth-theoretic semantic account is attempted, the God-language sentences resist in such a way as to be deemed different from literal language. From (9-16) and (17-20) we conclude that the predictions of the hypothesis that moral attributives are metaphoric fails in that sentences containing them are neither patently false nor absurdly true. Further, the flouting of Gricean maxims do not apply. It is evident that moral attributives in Evangelical Christian religious language like *holy*, *righteous* and *sacred* are attributes the whole of which are found in deity and the part of which are found in humanity, just as in *good*, *just* and *true*, which also introduces a clear polysemy, which metaphor cannot entirely explain. Finally, the predictions of the synecdochic hypothesis are born out: a human-to-deity direction of application in moral attributives like *good*, *just* and *true* coincides with part-for-whole synecdoche; when the direction is deity-to-human, as in *holy*, *righteous* and *sacred*, a whole-for-part synecdoche results; the God-language of Evangelical Christianity exhibits a two part polysemy in part-for-whole synecdoche and a three part polysemy in whole-for-part synecdoche.

NOTES

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[1] In this paper I use *believer* in terms of an Evangelical Christian believer.

[2] In this paper, I use moral attributives, religious language, and God-language interchangeably.

[3] *Introducing Christian Doctrine* is an abridged version of Erickson's *Christian Theology*.

[4] I.e., Christians who are not clergy.

[5] A truth-theoretic account of meaning described more from a linguistic point of view can be found, for example, in Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 1993.

[6] Throughout this paper, *object* may include not only inanimate entities, but also people, ideas, objects in logical space, and non-physical entities in general.

[7] The affiliation in question, naturally, is to Evangelical Christianity. For the sake of perspicuity, this is an idealization. In reality, judgments on applicability would be in a gradation for the whole-for-part attributives: as a person's religious affiliation was further removed from standard Evangelical Christianity, the less likely a deity-to-human attributive is to be accepted. *Affiliation* here should be seen as a technical term. Thus, see notes 9 and 11, below.

[8] It will be important to note for this section and §5.2 that it is a general Evangelical Christian belief that *Christian* implies more than a simple affiliation with the Christian religion, but a deeper commitment in a salvific sense, thus the usage of *unregenerate* in the Erickson quote and in (13).

[9] When Evangelical Christians might deem (16a) to be acceptable is when (14b) is presupposed, namely, that the believing conqueror is ordering an annihilation that God has ordered.

[10] In keeping with notes 8 and 9 above, it is important to point out that a gradation of acceptability for *holy*, etc. is more in keeping with the reality of Evangelical Christian belief than the idealization presented her for simplicity's sake. Thus, in addition to (17) we could possibly have (iia), while (iib, c) will be questionable.

(ii) a. Mary the devout Catholic is holy and righteous.
b. %Flora the Wicca devout is holy and righteous
c. %Fauna the animist is holy and righteous.

While the Flora or Fauna of (iia) and (iib) might be acknowledged each as a *holy person*, such a label is in all likelihood an understanding of their status within their own belief context.

[11] There are further complications. Mary the judge may be said to be righteous, but such a usage carries with it strong religious connotations concerning law. If George is a believer and a judge, this poses no problem, but if he is an atheist judge, then the attributive might be construed as nonsensical; when it is not, it is likely a result of long association between deity and law as founded in religion.

[12] Soskice 1985 has pointed out the inadequacy of using examples of the form *X is a Y* for talking about metaphor, and the same holds true for synecdoche. However, for simplicity the aforementioned example is utilized in this paper. Other forms also bear up under scrutiny; consider a form *X does Y*, where *X* is a moral attributive and a name or entity and *Y* is an action, in examples (i) and (ii) below.

(ii) a. The good God annihilates nations.
b. %The good king Sam annihilates nations.
(iii) a. %The holy God violates Gods own laws.
b. The holy George violates Gods own laws.

The results of acceptability and pragmatic oddness are the same as for examples in §5.1 and §5.2 where the example is *X is Y*.

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